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PP RUEHROV  
DE RUEHEG #2315 3511507  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 171507Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
TO RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4474  
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS CAIRO 002315

SIPDIS

S/CT FOR SHORE; NCTC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [EFIN](#) [KCRM](#) [KHLS](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [AEMR](#) [EG](#)  
SUBJECT: EGYPT: 2009 COUNTRY REPORT ON TERRORISM

REF: SECSTATE 109980

¶1. Egypt is an ally on counter-terrorism issues. The Egyptian and U.S. governments maintained a robust dialogue on a broad range of counter-terrorism and law enforcement issues in 2009 and exchanged information on a variety of terrorism, security, and law enforcement matters during the course of the year.

¶2. There were successful terrorist attacks in Egypt in 2009. In February 2009, a bomb exploded in the popular Khan El Khalil market place, killing a young French tourist and wounding a number of other foreign tourists. In May, Egyptian authorities announced the arrest of seven suspects. On May 10, a bomb exploded in a car parked near the Cathedral of the Virgin Mary in Cairo's Zeitoun neighborhood. There were no injuries, minimal property damage and no claims of responsibility.

¶3. The Egyptian government's active opposition to Islamist terrorism, and effective intelligence and security services, makes Egypt an unattractive locale for terror groups. In April, however, Egypt announced it had arrested 49 members of a Hezbollah cell in Egypt, and in July, government prosecutors said that 26 members of the cell had been transferred to a State Security Court for trial. Egypt's northern Sinai region is a base for the smuggling of arms and explosives into Gaza, and a transit point for Gazan Palestinians. Palestinian officials from Hamas have also carried large amounts of cash across the border. The smuggling of humans, weapons, and other contraband through the Sinai into Israel and the Gaza Strip has created criminal networks that may be associated with terror groups in the region. The apparent radicalization of some Sinai Bedouin may possibly be linked in part to these smuggling networks and Egyptian efforts to dismantle them.

¶4. In the past six years, Egypt has tightened its terror finance regulations in keeping with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions. Egypt passed strong anti-money laundering legislation in 2002, established a financial intelligence unit in 2003, and ratified the latest UN Convention to Combat Terror Finance in 2005. In 2008, Egypt strengthened its anti-money laundering legislation by specifically adding terrorism financing to the list of punishable crimes. The Government of Egypt also maintains open lines of communication with U.S. Embassy officials concerning terrorist finance information. Egypt regularly informs its own financial institutions of any individuals or entities which are designated by any of the UN sanctions committees.

¶5. Egypt maintained its strengthened airport security measures and security for the Suez Canal, and continued to institute more stringent port security measures.

¶6. The Egyptian judicial system does not allow plea

bargaining, and terrorists have historically been prosecuted to the full extent of the law. Terrorism defendants may be tried in military tribunals or emergency courts. In terms of evidence for counter-terrorism cases in the U.S., Egypt's judicial system is cooperative within the framework of the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT). (Note: The MLAT is a formal mechanism for the United States to request from Egypt evidence for use in U.S. courts. End note.)

¶7. Many of the Egyptian president's far-reaching powers in the realm of counter-terrorism come from Egypt's Emergency Law, which has been in force since 1981, and was renewed by Parliament for two years in June 2008. President Mubarak has pledged to lift the Emergency Law and has called for new anti-terrorism legislation to replace the Emergency Law, noting that Egypt should follow the example of other countries that have recently passed comprehensive laws to combat terrorism. Such legislation reportedly has been drafted but not submitted to or approved by Egypt's Parliament.

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